

the problem of creating new households, and Americans are used to having a very large pool from which to select mates, even though the girl or boy next door is still a favored choice. In many cultures, however, villages are exogamous, and the importation of wives or, less frequently, husbands is one of the principal links to the wider society. This is true on the whole in Israeli *kibbutzim*, where the children grow up almost as members of the same family. Urban Americans are also used to living in a large-enough community to absorb severe perturbations and provide considerable privacy, so that when marriages split, estranged spouses do not keep running into each other at the same parties, and one is not marked forever by a notable piece of folly in the seventh grade. In most communes today, when a marriage breaks up, one partner leaves the community, which is too small to absorb the strain; this is one example of a general pattern of exporting individuals when they are discontented or their lives are disrupted, a common flaw of utopia.

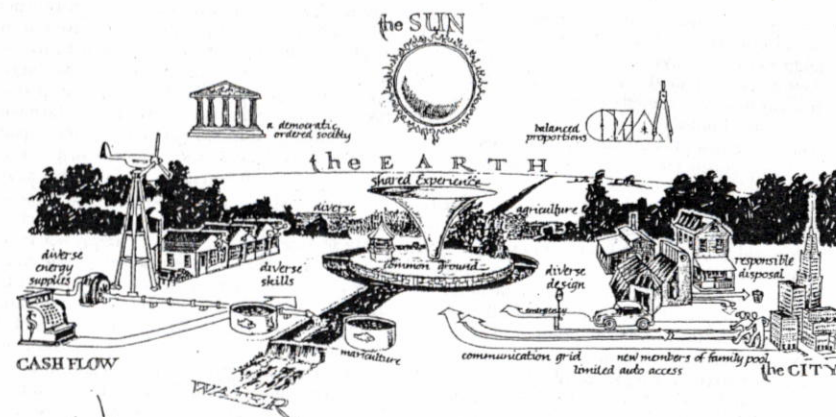
Does village life inevitably have to be monotonous, so that regardless of who goes to start the village the next generations will become peasants? Unless this question is addressed, there seems to be little use in trying to swim against the tide that has made people through history anxious to get away from their villages, from the tedium of agriculture and from neighbors who know them all too well, and go to the city, where the range of choice of all kinds is so much greater, using old villages as, at the most, bedroom communities. It seems important that even if a village is able to be largely self-sufficient in food and energy production, it should not try for cultural self-sufficiency and it should have some specialties that are wanted

by surrounding communities. Through history such exchanges as rotating rural markets have provided the moments of excitement. Most of us want to reduce the movement of people and objects in vehicles sharply, but not the movement of ideas and the stimulation of communication, perhaps through local and regional decentralized video.

It seems unlikely that small communities will be able to strike a balance between cultural openness and local generativity and to maintain the sense of common purpose and identity needed to balance the reduction in apparent choice that goes with leaving the city and reducing mobility without a shared sense of the sacred and common rituals. Over and over in our discussions, the sacred grove or meadow has seemed to be essential as a center to the community, bringing into focus a pattern of participation. Common rituals would have to address the ecological values that undergird the community and justify its basic choices. They would also have to address the transitions and steps in the life cycle that in America are so often dealt with by moving on. Closely linking to the centrality of a common sense of the sacred would be a provision for the very young and the very old, both groups a focus of common care, and neither segregated from the work and production of the community.

It is really only the automobile that makes us think of villages in primarily spatial rather than social terms. A village is not so much a place where a given house is located as the locus of a family, a festival, a garden, or a fish pool, a focus of the lives of many individuals, closely interlocked. In effect, we are talking about breathing new life into what we mean when we say that we live in a given place.

SOLIDARITY CENTER
1119 MASSACHUSETTS
LAWRENCE, KS 66044
785-865-1374



CONCEPTUALIZING the VILLAGE

The Need for Villages

William Irwin Thompson

I grew up in Los Angeles. Recently I had the misfortune to have to return there. As it turned out, the day of my visit was richly endowed with the worst smog in a quarter of a century. In addition, the foothills and mountains encircling the city were ablaze with forest fires. The first fires were natural, but they soon inspired arsonists to work in harmony with nature. As I flew over the city toward the airport, I remembered Nathaniel West's apocalyptic novel *The Day of the Locust*, in which the hero is obsessed with creating a painting called "The Burning of Los Angeles."

The ride on the freeway from the airport was equally unsettling. I sat in a five-mile-long traffic jam of cars, each with a single driver and each with its motor idling gently into the receptive air, and as I gazed out across the valley through the grayish-brown, thick flannel sky, I listened to the reports on the car radio of the sick and the elderly

being rushed to the hospitals for oxygen. Looking at the freeway and wondering how anybody could be rushed anywhere, I remembered the excellent Pacific Electric mass transit system that Los Angeles had in the forties and early fifties, but, through the conniving of General Motors with the city fathers, had torn down to replace it with the more "modern" freeway system. Now there is talk of trying to rebuild the railway, but talk is cheap and capital is scarce. The dollar is declining, the international monetary system is disintegrating, and all our social systems are coming due for reconstruction at the same time: highways, railroads, hospitals, and ACBMs. People talk of rebuilding, but it is clear that we are entering a period of social and economic stagnation. The boom mentality that enabled the L.A. boosters to tear down the Pacific Electric railway system and build the freeways in the fifties cannot be conjured up again in the eighties.

People have been complaining about the smog in L.A. for thirty years, but when it comes down to a choice between the industrial values of development and high employment and the ecolog-

ical values of conservation and public health, people in our society choose to buy more cars and build more freeways with their suburban appendages. As I sat in the car going nowhere on a freeway in L.A., I thought to myself: "And people think that Lindsfarne is a utopian community! This is the real utopian fantasy of freedom in an imagined consumer's paradise. Los Angeles is a historical mistake."

But if Los Angeles is the true nowhere city, where do we go from here, when the entire post-war world, from Long Island to Rio to Sydney to Tehran to Jeddah, has tried to imitate Los Angeles.

The answer is that we must turn on the historical spiral and approach the preindustrial village from the higher cultural level of postindustrial cybernetics and ecology.¹ But to tell a city planner that he should start thinking about villages is like telling a naval architect of supertankers that he should start thinking about sailboats.² It is a common cry among social activists that since so many people live in cities, all of our thinking and planning should be devoted to cities. Even to think about the village is for them an exercise in romanticism and escapism. The imperialism of this mentality is part of the problem, not the solution. But even beyond its arrogance, it is also ignorant. Two billion people, or roughly half the earth's population, live in villages.³

Even if one thinks that cities are the only cultural forms that matter, one needs to remember that historically cities, as Jane Jacobs has shown,⁴ have often spun off their innovations to the countryside, where the landscape was more open to novel creations. The engineers may have gathered in eighteenth-century London, but they spun off their industrial Revolution to Manchester and Birmingham. It is, therefore, part of the process of civilization for an urban intelligentsia to come together from New York, Boston, or San Francisco, but to spin off their metaindustrial villages from Manhattan to Crestone, Colorado, or coastal Maine.

Urbanization, nationalism, and industrialization have been the major forces that have shaped the modern world, but now that industrial world-system of warring nation-states is changing. Thermomuclear warfare in its mental form as an informational construct is eroding the traditional structure of the nineteenth-century railroad-consolidated nation-state. Industrialization is altering the global atmosphere and generating climatic changes that threaten the agricultural base of a

postindustrial society like ours in which two percent feed the ninety-eight percent involved in the production of goods and service. And urbanization is straining the infrastructures of the vast megalopolis that sprang up in the era of cheap fossil fuel. Cheap oil and gas allowed us to turn farmland into shopping malls and parking lots, and replace small nucleated towns with highway strips of gas stations and fast-food take-out joints. Now as the fuel crisis fuels the food crisis and both stimulate the currency crisis, we face a situation in which the postwar American way of life is simply not viable.

In 1800, more than ninety percent of the American population lived in rural areas; even as late as 1890, two-thirds of the American population lived in the countryside. By 1950, two-thirds of the population lived in cities.⁵ Well, if a social movement can go that fast in one direction in an age of printed communication, it can move even faster in the other direction in an age of electronic communication. In point of fact, there is already evidence that the movement has begun to reverse and that people are moving out of the cities, not to the suburbs, but to rural areas.⁶ But if we are not careful, this dispersal of the population could simply become the spreading of an oil slick of thin urban scum from Miami to Los Angeles. The trailer camps of Orlando, Florida, and El Monte, California, will move across the country to meet one another in the Ozarks. Clearly, we have to spend some time intuiting and thinking, not simply about cities and planned suburbs like Columbia, Maryland, but about villages.

Expressed in the move from an international, postindustrial city to a planetary, metaindustrial village is a shift from one world-system to another. It is a shift from consumer to contemplative values, a shift from an industrial mentality of the domination of nature and the mass production of culture to an ecological mentality of symbiosis, integration of the intuitive with the intellectual, and unique regional approaches to global processes. It is a shift from the coal-and-oil supported capital-intensive economies of the scale of the old factory systems of Detroit and Manchester to ecologically sound workshop-production for regional markets. Such an approach is already being pioneered by the multinational Phillips Company and its Utrecht Pilot Plant.

Nineteenth-century physics and technology created a way of seeing nature that influenced the way of organizing society, but now ecology is changing the way we see natural processes, and

good. In scientific terms, flat terrain (earth) is suitable for farming and building; the tall mountains (metal) benefit the land by sheltering it from the wind and providing water resources. Similarly, water nourished wood; wood produces fire; fire produces earth. All these combinations are good. Using the same logic, water destroys fire—literally water can extinguish fire; they conflict with each other and are thus evil. In scientific terms, hilly terrain is not suitable for agriculture or building. It is also not difficult to find a reason for fire destroying metal—fire can melt metal. Fire destroys wood—wood burns in fire.

Hence, gradually sloped mountains and ribbon-like, winding rivers are thought to be auspicious because "earth" mountains could be cultivated and "earth" rivers controlled. Sharp and irregular shapes are considered evil because the "fire" or "metal" mountains often have rocky foundations, unsuitable for farming.

The drawings (Figures 1 and 2) indicate the auspicious or evil placement of dwellings on a site is from one of the many books of *feng-shui*. The diagrams are explained in poems as superstitious predictions. However, one can see the scientific basis to them. These drawings represent the dwellings in their physical relationship to water, mountains, and roadways, and their orientation to sun or shade.

In some cases, the *feng-shui* principles reflect the social situation of the time. For example, a house is defenseless if placed at a crossroad.

Feng-shui also encourages auspicious planting of particular types of trees. For example, it is beneficial to plant plum or date trees to the south, apricot trees to the north, willows to the east, and pine trees to the west. Plum trees love sun, apricot trees prefer cool shade, willows wave in the morning sun creating lacy shadows, and the low westerly sun is shaded by dense pines.

The application of *feng-shui* to building location and design was based on a belief that whenever possible the house should face a southerly direction, toward the warmth of the sun, and sit with its back to a large hill that would protect the dwelling from the wind. There also should be two smaller hills flanking the sides to form a special enclosure that would provide a sense of unity and security. The front view should be clear and open for defense. Hills should not block the light. Water was necessary; however, it should be located in front and parallel to the house. These considerations have led to a particularly refined appreciation of the topographical features of any locality, and the efforts to achieve a favorable balance of forces have brought about a uniquely sensitive environment with dwelling places quietly nestled in the contours of the landscape.

A Single Shared World

Mary Catherine Bateson

Traditionally, the village is characterized by a certain minimum level of diversity and a size that makes motion within it convenient. Although in complex societies villages live in awareness of urban centers, and villagers travel to the city to meet special needs, for pilgrimages or to petition authority, most of the day-to-day activity is carried on within the village. If the land is very fertile, the population may be large—say ten thousand. This is true in such places as Egypt, where small tracts of the Nile-fed land support large numbers of people. That number of people might live in a dense, compact cluster and be able to get up and walk to the farthest fields, carry on the necessary cultivation, and walk home, all between dawn and dusk. Alternatively, if the land is dry and hard, limitations of time and human and animal walking may mean that a village has only a few families, a hundred people or even fewer. A small village can support very few specialists, but it must have a few, usually a midwife, someone with some necessary healing or ritual skills, some pattern of leadership if only an elder who is habitually consulted, and one or more craftsmen such as a carpenter or metal worker who help in constructing housing and repairing tools. A large village can support a considerable number of specialists and can also have considerable diversity within its population, but even if village life is rich enough so that many inhabitants only participate in a part of it, a village is not a conglomeration of separate worlds but a single shared world.

This is all very different to think oneself back into today, and it is difficult even to find the appropriate characteristics of a preindustrial village to provide a model for the metaindustrial village. How much self-sufficiency are we concerned with, in food and energy and expertise? How tightly is the metaindustrial village integrated into a national power grid for its electricity, a national economic system that converts its crops into cash for buying merchandise produced elsewhere, and a national information system that subjects the opinions of the villagers and the music they can produce for their own festivals to the comparisons of the big time? In our discussions, we tended to assume a walking community with at least the capacity for self-sufficiency in an emergency, a bias toward producing its own foodstuffs, and at least one significant cash-producing activity.

Most difficult to think through are the social limitations. Every stable village society must solve

¹See William Irwin Thompson. 1978. *The meta-industrial village. In Darkness and Scattered Light*. N.Y.: Doubleday-Ancor, pp. 57-103.

²See John Todd, 1979. *Ocean arks. Co-Evolution Quarterly* 13:46.

³1979. *Village economics. The Economist*, p. 117.

⁴Jane Jacobs, 1970. *The Economy of Cities*. N.Y.: Vintage.

⁵See George Cabot Lodge. 1976. *The New American Ideology*. N.Y. Knopf, p. 125.

⁶1979. *Back to the Land. The Economist* 49.



為土青白黑次之其群具天機素
 水味可以知地脈之故有井泉之
 法平陽平崗不出水須水須晴後
 則嘗其溪澗雨後嘗其之

EVIL — The house situated at the turning point of a river is in jeopardy when the water erodes the bank.

Figure 2.

formed by jotting down on paper a number of dots at random." Clearly, the Chinese practice of *feng-shui* has nothing to do with geomancy as defined by this dictionary. Steven J. Bennett wrote in his article "Chinese Topographical Thinking," that he considered *feng-shui* to be a systematic theory. A case in point is the topographical science of "siting," used to discover the flow of energy through the earth so that residences of the living and the dead can be placed in areas that have favorable energy conditions. A conceptual analysis of classical Chinese siting texts reveals that siting always was a rational activity, attempting to structure reality through a theoretical quasi-religious framework. In short, *feng-shui* was a nascent science, explaining hitherto phenomena on a level that could be understood by even the most superstitious country dweller. To gain popular acceptance and respect, it cloaked common sense and scientific truth with the awesome authority of mystic revelation.

Feng-shui originated from the *Dzang Jing*, the *Burial Book*, which concerns itself with the selection of burial sites and the orientation of graves. According to one source, the *Dzang Jing* dated back to the ancient Zhou Dynasty (722-480 BC), but became most popular during the Sung Dynasty (960-1126 AD). Because of traditional emphasis on filial piety (honoring one's parents), proper burial was an important concern of heirs and descendants. During the Yuan (1260-1368 AD) and Ming Dynasties (1368-1644 AD), *feng-shui* flourished in architecture, and its influence is especially discernible in the design of the palaces and temples of Beijing. During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 AD), *feng-shui* was widely used, both to establish orientation and to select propitious dates for such activities as moving into a new house. At present, *feng-shui* is still being practiced, though it has become an honored tradition rather than an entrenched superstition. What may once have been followed in fear is now respected in reverence to a rich and ancient culture.

The principles of *feng-shui* provide a scheme for understanding land forms, as in the theory of the five basic elements, *wu-xing*. According to this theory, the rough shape of everything in nature falls into the category of metal, wood, water, fire, or earth. For example, in Figure 1, we see the classification of shapes of mountains and waters. When objects in nature are classified and placed in combination they present evil or good fortune. From this juxtaposition, good sites for building are found, because according to the theory of five elements, the five interacting forces either produce one another or destroy one another. For example, earth produces metal—literally metal is deposited in the earth. Thus, they complement each other and are

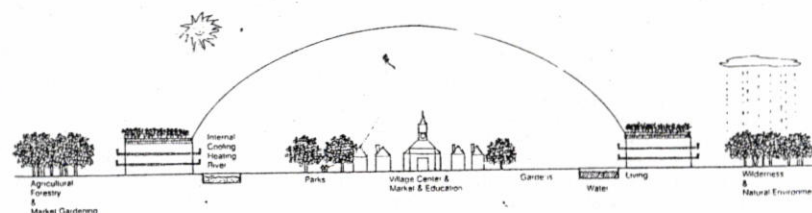
therefore it will influence the way we will organize society in the transition from one world-system to another. In the union of ecology and microelectronics we are beginning to re-vision the relationship of culture to nature. As the world restructures itself into a planetary culture, the nation-state will destructure itself into more viable areas of regional identity; concomitant with this process is a restructuring of the megalopolis. In the rise of the ecological and electronic village, we will not see the disappearance of the city; rather we will see an intensification and miniaturization of the city. The highly civilized city, like Ficino's Florence or Goethe's Weimar, does not have to be a megalopolis. In the relation of village to city, America could follow the pattern of Switzerland, where rural areas, villages, and highly cultured cities like Zurich or Basel coexist.

The example of Switzerland is instructive for America in other ways. The valleys in Switzerland have been cultivated for thousands of years. Closed in by the mountains, the Swiss could not develop the pioneer mentality to exploit nature and then move on. We, however, created the Dust Bowl and then moved on to California, and now that California is fast becoming destroyed, the leaders of the aerospace companies of the West are saying that we are meant to exhaust the earth's resources and then move on to artificial colonies in space. In the hucksterism of this industrial mentality the earth is simply another piece of Kleenex: use once and throw away. The proponents of unlimited industrialization cannot accept the limits of the bio-

sphere as the Swiss accepted the limits of the mountains. But as we move into the eighties, it seems clear that the boom mentality of the sixties is not in touch with our historical condition.

America is being forced to change and to think in new ways. We are like a succession-forest culture that is changing into a climax-forest culture. The waves of rapid development are over, and a new, richly diversified ecology is being called forth. Once again, Switzerland can teach America a great deal about how a country can be a federation of decentralized cantons, how a nation can have many languages side by side, and how a rich agricultural tradition can coexist with highly complex precision industries. Perhaps now that Quebec is moving in an independent direction and Spanish is becoming the language of tens of millions in the United States, we are already well into a new and rich cultural transformation.

As the monolithic mentality disappears from nationalism, the monocrop mentality will disappear from agriculture, and the monolithic Los Angeles will disappear from urbanization. The Los Angelization of the planet cannot take the place, for in the greenhouse effect nature has her own negative feedback mechanisms for shutting down the furnace of industrial civilization. If we do not re-vision the relationship of culture to nature through a new alchemy, then the villages of the future will not be planetary, meta-industrial, and electronic; they will be provincial, pre-industrial, and sputtering with the dwindling light of a growing Dark Age.



Ourkind¹

Keith Critchlow

What is the sacred? The simple answer is, What isn't? But we can define it if we wish. The sacred is that which is essential to our existence.

¹A word that emerged during the conference. It means the totality of the human family: ideal and actual.

Essential to our existence means not only the physical supports of our existence but the things that are simultaneously essential to our intelligence and being, in brief: right-livelihood. Ghandi expresses it succinctly: "There is always enough for our needs and never enough for our greeds." This is the very definition of greed—more energy out than the system can stand. Ultimately the only possible "profit" is one of *altitude*—a metaphysical profit of well-being and understanding. All else is vanity, as some would say. The universal law seems

Our feet "handle" the earth as our hands "handle" the air, water, green life, and animals. Our "contact" is our awareness and sensitivity—our intrinsic choice. Caring is the basis of all good relationships.

So what is our first move back from the periphery to the heart of the matter? The first move back from the desecrated to a sacred space?

Our solar villages express our intention to move from the "energy greed" context of "modern industrial culture" into a new relationship between ourselves and our planetary homes. This new order will be based on a mutual dependence or reciprocal maintenance in accordance with cosmic rather than merely human justice.

Within our intended space we aim to express a sanity of wholeness that is the mark of the natural world. Interdependent domains based on a dynamic balance will be our wisdom, our cosmology. Because what else is wisdom or cosmology but a balanced whole, just as a balanced mind is sanity, and a balanced body is health. The sacrifice of the part to the whole will be in the original sense of

We must replace the attention on energy with attention on light (the sun) and matter, or better, what matters—Mother Earth. After all we can only see by the light of the sun, directly or indirectly, in every sense of the meaning of the word. And when all matters are put together we must arrive at the profound significance of the immanence of our planetary condition and our mother, the Earth.

A communal sacrifice in the offering sense, a giving thanks for the bounty of nature and our being, this central "village green" would function in the same sense as common land in the English tradition, which ensures that land is set aside for any contingencies in the community. Should, for instance, economic difficulties befall any member, the common green was a refuge, a resource, a sanctuary in all senses. This central space would also be a refuge for the whole community, as it would represent a way in which we could raise ourselves from the mechanistic model of eating, sleeping, procreating, and working; it would be a place set aside for contemplating the mystery of existence and for being thankful for one's fortunes—whatever. The keeping of the green would be a communal responsibility and would express communal joy.

Space: giving existence location, inner and outer.

Time: giving it duration and timelessness.

Form: giving it recognizability, a whereness, and orientation.

Number: giving it accountability of people, things, and relationships.

Substance: giving it measurability, concretely and understandably.

Sacredness can be found at the center of all the conditions of existence, as sacredness is the invisible heart of any matter.

Paul Sun (Sun Peng-Cheng)

To understand why an early form of environmental science should be called *feng-shui*, winds and waters, one has only to ponder the overwhelming importance of these elemental forces in early China, or indeed in any ancient culture. The winds and waters had unlimited power to affect human life, and people felt helpless before such apparently capricious manifestations of nature's might. As a result, the ancient saying was true: "He who controls the water governs the empire." The cold northerly winds were a lethal threat to the people of North China, while southerly winds accompanied by rain could cause disastrous flooding in South China. Protection from winds, water management, and flood control were the very key to a better life for the people of China. Hence, the first priority in providing a comfortable dwelling and a happy homelife was to choose a house site that would be relatively free from natural disasters. According to *feng-shui*, therefore, the basic auspicious home site was a place surrounded by a horseshoe-shaped barrier of mountains to the north, with fresh water easily accessible, but no raging river near. In this and other practical examples, we see *feng-shui* as a conceptual system for understanding the physical environment and a method for selecting sites that will be harmonious with it.

In Western literature, we sometimes find the practice of *feng-shui* translated as "geomancy," a term that is quite misleading. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, geomancy means the "art of divination by means of signs derived from the earth, as by the figure assumed by a handful of earth thrown down some surface . . . Hence, usually, divination by means of lines or figures



AUSPICIOUS — The northern mountain blocks the house from cold north winds. The winding river makes the water run smoothly so it can be used as resource without being dangerous. In addition it provides a nice view.

Figure 1.